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AUTHOR	Pautler, Albert J., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

This paper is intended to guide small groups of vocational educators in discussions regarding work force education issues for the next century. The following work force issues are suggested: the aging work force; vocational education's role in reforming K-12 education; distance education for technical education programs; the labor shortages resulting from lack of interest in job training; work force preparation for the Knowledge/Imagination Age, which will follow the Information Age; and the lack of career selection in the middle schools. Presented next are selected comments from a labor economist regarding needed types of work force education. The next section is devoted to the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which calls for the following: locally based work force development programs; key role for local elected officials; private sector-led work force investment boards; "one stop" systems with required partners; adult education and literacy, welfare-to-work, postsecondary, veterans, and older worker programs; and community service block grants. Concluding the paper is a brief description of the school-based work force education program offered at Horry County Academy for the Arts, Sciences, and Technology in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. (MN)

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University at Buffalo
State University of New York

Dept. of Educational Leadership and Policy
Graduate School of Education
Christopher Baldy Hall Rm. 468
Box 601000
Buffalo, NY 14260-1000

Tel: (716) 645-2471
Fax: (716) 645-2481
E-mail: cmnorris@acsu.buffalo.edu

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Workforce Education: Issues for the New Century

Albert J. Pautler, Jr.
Professor of Education
University at Buffalo
478 Baldy Hall
Buffalo, NY 14260
716-645-3164
e-mail: apautler@acsu.buffalo.edu

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BEST COPY AVAILABLE

After some forty plus years of working in, studying about, writing about, and researching about preparing people for work (employment) I am more confused now then when I started my teaching career. I am confused about the best way to prepare people for employment. Do any of you share this confusion, or do you have the answer to workforce preparation ?

My teaching career began in 1957 as an Industrial Arts teacher in a blue collar school district near a rust belt city in the east. My major area of technical skill was in electronics. Vocational high schools of the four year variety existed in the rust belt city. They still exist today. Area vocational centers of the two year variety developed in the burbs and rural areas at that time. They still exist today. Technical institutes became community colleges. They still exist today.

Do you remember, Grant Venn ? Do you remember the "flow and pool concept" ? We still have not eliminated the pool of unemployed or underemployed in this country and I doubt if we ever will. Grant Venn wrote Man Education and Work in 1964 and Man, Education, and Manpower in 1970. How many of you still have copies of these two books ? Take a look at them when you get back home.

Last month my wife and I did a little R & R in Myrtle Beach, SC. While in SC I arranged a visit to a most interesting school. We visited the Horry County Academy for the Arts, Sciences, and Technology. This school is part of a large county school district and is designed to serve 11th and 12th grade students on either a shared time or full time basis. It offered three majors in the arts, science, and technology. Is this a vocational school ? Is it part of the workforce preparation system of this country ? More about this school a little later.

Purpose and Goals

In preparing for this presentation I requested several respected educators to list five to ten issues of importance dealing with workforce education issues for the new century. I received responses from: Bill Blank, Ken Gray, Jerry Leventhal, Susan Olson, Dave Pucel, and Mickey Sarkees Wircenski. I want to thank them for taking time to respond to my request.

In addition I asked a senior labor economist to respond to the same question. This person did so, but, requested that the remarks be "off the record."

As a result, rather than present still another paper, I decided to try to use this session as a working together and sharing session. In this room we have some of the leaders in vocational and technical education and workforce education. So I am suggesting an interactive session that will involve some small group discussions and sharing and individual comments and ideas. Perhaps, we can all leave with some ideas to guide us in our efforts in workforce education in the new century.

Some Suggested Workforce Issues (educators)

(1) The aging workforce. Diversity in the workforce. Technical updates. Accommodations for special populations. Pace of technology. Job displacement. Local and state control of programs. Business-industry partnerships.

(2) Defining V/E's role in reforming K-12 education. Breaking the current stranglehold that higher education has on the secondary curriculum. Recruiting quality teachers in industrial education (non-degree) and technology. Include workplace readiness in every childs' education. Continue image battle.

(3) Distance education for technical education programs. New teacher education programs for workforce teachers. STW incorporated into teacher education programs. Diversity in workforce. Support for workforce education.

(4) Lack of interest--thus labor shortages. Unemployment of college graduates. Widening wage gap between high and low incomes. Need just in time training versus programs that take 1,2, and 3 years. Distance education. Need to train "older workers".

(5) Workforce preparation for the knowledge/imagination age as we leave the information age. The role of the high school in workforce education.

(6) The status game in America..... Lack of career selection in the middle schools. Integrating workforce education into all secondary programs. New initiatives to replace Industrial Arts in the curriculum. Career counseling for all students. Leadership skills in all courses. Need for supervised field experiences.

Some Suggested Workforce Issues (selected comments from the labor economist)

---The longer I study the world of work, the more I am convinced that the "more things change the more they stay the same".

---The new information age is developing incredible opportunities for those able to participate as players. The stock market is a perfect example for the capital market.

---However, high tech (emerging) industries do not necessarily require high tech skills. Today's growth in call centers is a good example. So called "high tech industries" often require a disproportionate number of low skilled/ low wage workers.

---When all is said and done, we will still require the proverbial :"butcher, baker, and candlestick maker" but their skills will require the application of digital technologies.

---The more the new technologies intrude on the old system the more important basic skills become - the more the new digital technologies will determine labor's value to the economic system.

---What bothers me even more is that the new tech-savy workers are really becoming the blue collar workers of the information age. Unfortunately, for the foreseeable future, it appears that only the high-end skills will benefit from the changing economic environment.

---The best solution for survival is to have good basic skills - not just the three R's but things like listening, analyzing, and being flexible. In addition, basic workplace skills like communication, applied math, computers, customer service skills are also essential not to mention the professional or technical skills related to their specific occupation.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

At this time I would like to ask you to work in small groups to discuss two items. Time is limited to about 15 minutes for both questions. See if you might arrive at some agreement on both questions.

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1) List five significant events that have changed workforce preparation programs since 1950. Please include both DOE and DOL programs and events since 1950.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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2) List what your group considers the top five (5) issues concerning workforce education issues for the new century.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

END DISCUSSION

Workforce Investment Act of 1998

I make the assumption, which is a danger in itself, that most of us in this room represent the education side of workforce preparation. I assume that we are well informed regarding the history of vocational education. We know all about the Morrill Act, Smith-Hughes, Smith-Lever, Vocational Training for World War I and World War II, George-Barden, Sputnik, NDEA 1958, VEA 63 and VEA 68, etc. We know the history of vocational education and teach it in our historical classes. We know names such as Hawkins, Prosser, Wright, Barlow, Swanson, Evans, Nystrom, Miller, etc.

No doubt many of us have had experience with DOL programs as well as DOE programs. In the 1970's I was asked and served on the Erie County Manpower Advisory Council for the CETA (1973) legislation. In addition I was asked to teach a course for our School of Management on Manpower and Vocational Education programs. This presented the opportunity to compare the historical development of both DOL and DOE workforce preparation programs.

I came to the conclusion that in the United States since after WW II we have allowed for the development of two systems of workforce preparation. One system is that sponsored by DOE and the other is that of the DOL. The DOL programs are remedial in nature. Do you recall MDTA, CETA, JTPA, and the newest the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

We also have other sources of workforce preparation programs including: the United States military; private trade and technical schools and colleges, community colleges, and corporate training programs.

At at recent meeting that I attended on November 13 the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 was explained in the following manner. The "drop dead" date for JTPA is 7/1/2000. Which is the phase in date for the WIA. The WIA is

--locally based
--key role for local elected officials
--private sector led workforce investment boards
--"One Stop" systems with required partners

* Job Training agency (PIC)
* Adult education and literacy
* Title I of Rehabilitation Act
* Welfare to Work
* Post Secondary Vocational Education
* Community Service Block Grants
* HUD Employment and Training programs
* Veterans Employment and Training
* Older Worker Programs

--K-12 agencies not eligible One Stop providers

Basic Principles of WIA

--Confirms to One Stop concept
--No eligibility requirements (Universal Service)
--"Work First"
--Training by voucher
--Performance measured on long term outcomes
--Long term relationship with customers
--Lower cost per success (technology)

Electronic One Stop Infrastructure

--Based on USDOL "America's Job Bank"
*Job Bank
*Talent Bank
*Career InfoNet
*Learning Exchange (to post training)

--Internet systems accessible by all at:

www.ajb.dni.us

At this time I would like to go back to my recent visit to SC that I mentioned in my opening remarks. The visit raised several serious questions in my mind regarding what I have know as vocational education.

But, perhaps, I have "been at the dance too long".

Horry County Academy for the Arts, Sciences, and Technology

I went away from this visit asking myself if this is the vocational education model for the future. It was an area school based program serving 11th and 12 grade students. It offered three career majors in Visual and Technical Arts; Performing Arts; and Science. Specific areas of study within these majors are: Theater, Dance and Creative Movement, Entertainment Technology, Advanced Visual and Electronic Art, Hospitality and Tourism, Education, Golf Course and Landscape Technology, Health Science and Medical Careers, and Pre-Engineering.

This two year program was designed to operate as both a full-time and shared time program. It uses a team concept integrating the vocational and academic with math, science, English and social studies included in the program. Seems to bring back concepts of the old type "A" and "B" programs of the Smith-Hughes days.

In addition during the junior year community service is a very important part of the program. During the senior year students engage in internships and a Senior Exhibition of Mastery. This exhibition is a major part of the senior year and includes career development and career planning for the future. I found it most interesting and worthy of further study.

I returned home asking myself if this is the vocational model for the future at the high school level.

At this time I would like to seek your ideas and input on the topic under discussion. I have prepared several focusing questions and seek your input and responses. What I propose is that you consider at least one question, prepare a two minute response, allow me to recognize you, identify yourself, identify the question, state your response.

Are you willing to give it a try ?

FOCUSING QUESTIONS

1. Should the term "workforce education" be reserved and used for only DOL sponsored programs ?

2. What should we call those programs at the high school level that state as their purpose the "preparation of students for employment and/or further education ?"

3. What is the most suitable term to identify technical preparation programs at the community college level ? (Vocational, technical, workforce, etc.)

4. In the latest Industrial Teacher Education Directory 1998-1999 I noticed the following use of titles and terms:

Penn State "Workforce Education and Development"; Temple "Vocational Program" in a Dept. of Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology in Education; University of Minnesota "Industrial Education"; University of Missouri "Technology & Industry Education" in a Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Ohio State University "Technology Education Section" and Department of Workforce Education & Lifelong Learning" both in a College of Education. University of Georgia "Program of Technological Studies" in a College of Education.

Are these various terms due to local or State priorities or survival of faculty and program, please explain ?

5. As we focus on the future of preparing youth and adults for careers what must we consider as our " TOP TEN LIST".

"Every day, an old man walked the beach with a pail, picking up starfish that had been washed in by the tide, and throwing them back into the sea. One day a young boy stopped the old man and asked ? "Why do you throw the starfish back ? It doesn't matter. They will only wash up on the shore again tomorrow." The old man picked a starfish out of his pail, threw it as far as he could, and replied.. "It mattered to this one."